

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Please cancel claims 1-13 and add the following new claims.

1-13. (Cancelled)

14. (New) A pellet-frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture in a commercially relevant package that has a weight of at least 50 g frozen material, wherein the frozen material is present in the form of individual pellets, having a content of viable bacteria of at least 10^9 colony forming units (CFU) per g frozen material and comprising from 0.5% to 13% of an additive compound measured as w/w of the frozen material, wherein the additive compound is an additive compound that is selected from the group of additive compounds consisting of Cyclodextrin, Maltitol, Trehalose, Fish gelatin, Maltodextrine, Yeast Extract and Spray gum, and which further is characterized by,

when using an amount of 10% of the additive compound measured as w/w of the frozen material, the compound is able to increase the T_m' (onset temperature of ice melting) of the frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture, which without the additive compound has a T_m' value from -70°C to -46°C , to a T_m' value above -46°C , such as from -45°C to -15°C (measured by DSC)

and wherein the frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture is characterized by that when stored at approximately -46°C for 7-14 days the individual pellets of the frozen culture are not sticking together and therefore substantially remain as individual pellets where this is measured by following test the individual pellets of the frozen culture are pellet frozen in liquid nitrogen and 100 individual pellets (around 5 – 100 g of pellets) are poured into a petridish, thus forming a thin layer of loose individual single pellets, the layer being characterized in that the majority of the pellets are in physically contact with one or more of its neighbor pellets, placed at approximately -46°C for 7-14 days and examined to see if the pellets are still loose or if the pellets had made clumps or are sticking together wherein the criteria for that the individual pellets of the frozen culture substantially remain as individual pellets are that at least 80 of the 100 individual pellets remain as loose individual single pellets;

with the exception of a frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture that comprises LAB that are able to utilize sucrose and wherein the culture comprises cryoprotective agent compound selected from the group consisting of sucrose in an amount from 2 % to 13 % of sucrose measured as w/w of the frozen material; and trehalose

in an amount from 4 % to 6 % of trehalose measured as w/w of the frozen material; and a trehalose/sucrose mixture both in the amount of 13% measured as w/w of the frozen material.

15. (New) The pellet-frozen culture of claim 14, wherein the culture is a mixed mesophilic culture consisting of mesophilic bacteria having optimum growth temperatures at about 30°C.

16. (New) The pellet-frozen culture of claim 14, wherein the LAB is a LAB selected from the group comprising *Bifidobacterium* spp., *Brevibacterium* spp., *Propionibacterium* spp., *Lactococcus* spp. including *Lactococcus lactis* subsp. *lactis* and *Lactococcus lactis* subsp. *cremoris*, *Lactobacillus* spp. including *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Streptococcus* spp., *Enterococcus* spp., *Pediococcus* spp., *Oenococcus* spp. and fungal spp. including *Penicillium* spp., *Cryptococcus* spp., *Debaryomyces* spp., *Kluyveromyces* spp. and *Saccharomyces* spp.

17. (New) The pellet-frozen culture of claim 14, wherein the frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture is a culture which without comprising the additive compound according to claim 14 has a T_m' value of from -70°C to -46°C.

18. (New) The pellet-frozen culture of claim 14, wherein the frozen lactic acid bacteria culture comprises from 5% to 10% of the additive compound measured as w/w of the frozen material.

19. (New) A method for making a pellet-frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture of claim 14 comprising the following steps:

- (i) adding an additive compound to viable bacteria to get at least 50 g of material with a content of viable bacteria of at least 10⁹ colony forming units (CFU) per g material and comprising the additive compound in an amount from 0.5% to 13% measured as w/w of the material,
- (ii) freezing the material to get pellet-frozen material, and
- (iii) packing the pellet-frozen material in a suitable way to get a packed frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture of claim 14.

20. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein

before adding the additive compound according to step (i) of claim 19 one has measured the T_m' value of the frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture without comprising the additive compound and identified that it has a T_m' value of from -70°C to -46°C;

and

after adding the additive compound is the Tm' value of the frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture comprising the additive compound measured and it is verified that the Tm' value is from -49°C to -15°C, more preferably from -39°C to -15°C.

21. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the culture is a mixed mesophilic culture consisting of mesophilic bacteria having optimum growth temperatures at about 30°C.

22. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the LAB is a LAB selected from the group comprising *Bifidobacterium* spp., *Brevibacterium* spp., *Propionibacterium* spp., *Lactococcus* spp. including *Lactococcus lactis* subsp. *lactis* and *Lactococcus lactis* subsp. *cremoris*, *Lactobacillus* spp. including *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Streptococcus* spp., *Enterococcus* spp., *Pediococcus* spp., *Oenococcus* spp. and fungal spp. including *Penicillium* spp., *Cryptococcus* spp., *Debaryomyces* spp., *Kluyveromyces* spp. and *Saccharomyces* spp.

23. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the frozen lactic acid bacteria culture comprises from 5% to 10% of the additive compound measured as w/w of the frozen material.

24. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the additive compound is an additive compound selected from the group consisting of Cyclodextrin, Maltitol, Trehalose, Fish gelatin, Maltodextrine, Yeast Extract and Spray gum.

25. (New) A pellet-frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture obtainable by the method for making a frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture of claim 19.

26. (New) Use of the pellet-frozen lactic acid bacteria (LAB) culture of claim 14 in a process for making a food or feed product.